Crescent City

6.11.15

It has been at least four days now since I became separated from my crew, but it was still no easier to believe that it had happened. After all, the fallen sequoia seemed like a momentary setback. All I had to do was backtrack, circle around it, and rejoin my comrades who were undoubtedly only minutes ahead on the trail. But the summer storm proved to be more than just an impedance to my visibility—it may turn out to be the fatal moment that started the final chapter of my life. I never did run into my crew again. I lost the game trail we were following, and I couldn’t find them anywhere.

Undoubtedly, the northern California wilderness is harsh, but beautiful. The rains fall like iron marbles, but the soil is softer than the living room carpet of my childhood home. Every breath of fresh air tastes like the breadth of the world itself. The moment I stepped onto this rocky beach I knew that if this is the last thing I see before I succumb to exhaustion, it would be a life well lived.

I always knew I would never have an office job, so in many ways I should have known this misadventure was bound to happen eventually. All I ever wanted in my life was to see the world; to understand it and explore it. Perhaps even, to become a part of it. Something about the natural order of things brought me comfort. Even when lightning felled a 300-year-old tree, new life would spring in its wake. Perhaps that will be my fate. I only hope that my time on this earth has given birth to something that will continue on after me.

I started this memoir in my notebook, on the off chance somebody may find it. Perhaps like Chris McCandless over 20 years ago, somebody may find my body and journal and see that I wasn’t just a crazy vagabond, but I needed to live in the natural world to feel at peace. Unlike Chris, I was lucky enough to find a job out here. Leading wildlife expeditions for biological researchers was the biggest stroke of luck I may ever find. I love the work, and if I ever find my way back to Crescent City, I will most definitely continue leading expeditions. Perhaps I will just check the forecast next time.

6.12.15

The storm has let up. I slept better than I have in days in my makeshift shelter on the beach. The heavy storm turned into a light drizzle sometime around midnight, and I peacefully drifted off to sleep. I awoke just before sunrise to see the sky clear for the first time in days.

As I looked around with some newfound hope, I may survive another day, I saw smoke billowing from the forested hills several miles away. It has to be from some sort of camp or cabin. Unfortunately, this happens to be in the complete opposite direction I need to be traveling. But I have been out of food since yesterday, and this may be my only chance of survival. While I was trying to catch crabs for breakfast, I debated for an hour whether or not I should go. Perhaps they were thru-hikers who are hours gone by now, and my hike will be in vain, sealing my fate. But what if it is a field station for another research team who will have a GPS and food? Ultimately, I have decided to go. I don’t know how many days away Crescent City is, but I do know I can find the source of this smoke by sundown.

**(Act 2A – Colin)**

6.13.15

I’ve have been hiking in the woods now for about a day and a half. It’s hard to tell exactly what time it is given the constant overcast. Although I do know that I am heading in the right direction toward the fire that I saw. If my assumptions are accurate the team of researchers I lost should be heading up the west side of the mountain edge. Hopefully, they are alright and doing well. By this point though I must pick up the pace. I’m slowly running out of food and water.

6.14.15

I’ve found it! After a late-night push, I was able to hike all the way to the campsite that made the fire. Strangely though there doesn’t seem to be much of a campsite here. I found a pile of dead cold charcoal and a rushed pile of discarded food scraps. Aside from that, there doesn’t seem to be any life here. On the bright side, I did spot another plume of smoke rising in the distance within a small patch of pine. I hope it’s the researchers.

6.15.15

I found them! At least someone anyway. Sadly, I couldn’t catch up to them even with all the screaming that I did to try and catch their attention. If I wasn’t clamoring over the sharp rocks I could have been able to at least reach them and explain my situation. Tomorrow I have to make one final ditch effort to find this person. I only caught a glimpse of them as well wearing a big brown jacket of some kind. Although I don’t recall anyone wearing that, anyone at this point would be nice.

6.16.15

I found some more discarded scraps, so I know I am on their tail. On a side note, I was able to find some food today. While I was hiking down into the valley I came across a huge field of berries. I was so happy to find some food that I immediately put them in my mouth. I don’t believe they are poisonous though. While I was picking some, I caught a rabbit nibbling at a small patch. I can’t imagine the little guy would be able to eat them and not me. So, I sat for a large majority of the day eating these nice red berries along with my rabbit friend. I got so full that I nearly forgot about the person I was trying to catch! At least things are looking up though.

6.17.15

I’m not sure if it is the berries or what but I certainly found who… or what I was looking for. As I recall the event, I was walking along a ridge when I looked down into the valley below. There I saw it. A large brown furry creature. At first, I was astonished at the sight and believed that it was an average bear. However, the more I looked the more I knew it wasn’t a bear. I starred and watched the creature for what I believed to be an hour as it rummaged through some charcoal. I had never seen anything like it before. Although I do know one thing is for sure. It is tracking someone. After it finished sniffing out the campsite it turned my way and ran off. I hope it didn’t see me because whatever it is it must be dangerous. I just wish that I was sitting on my couch right now in Crescent City!...